

## Message Text

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12  
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

EB-07 AID-05 MC-02 ACDA-07 /091 W  
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R 112145Z AUG 76  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0798

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 7800

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, CI  
SUBJECT: CHILE: DISCUSSION WITH EX-PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI

1. SUMMARY: EX-PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI DISCUSSES CURRENT CONDITIONS IN CHILE AND DIFFICULTIES WITH WHICH CHILEAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY MUST COPE. END SUMMARY.
  2. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER EX-PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI AND I WERE GUESTS AT THE SAME DINNER AUGUST 10, AND WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A PRIVATE CHAT.
  3. FREI'S DISTASTE FOR AND DISGUST WITH THE JUNTA HAVE NOT CHANGED MATERIALLY SINCE I LAST SAW HIM SOME MONTHS AGO. HE EXHIBITED GREAT INDIGNATION OVER THE SUMMARY EXPULSION OF LAWYERS EUGENIO VELASCO AND JAIME CASTILLO. SAID CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS IN EUROPE WOULD SEEK TO RAISE THE MATTER IN UN AND OAS ORGANS, AS A VIOLATION OF RESOLUTIONS REGARDING CHILE IN THOSE AGENCIES WHICH HAD HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES. ON BASIS OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO ISRAEL AND GERMANY, HE FELT STRENGTH OF CENTER-LEFT OPPOSITION TO JUNTA HAD NOT DIMINISHED AND WOULD CONTINUE TO BE MANIFESTED IN MANY WAYS.
  4. FREI SAID THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE ADOPTED A NEW TACTIC VIS-A-VIS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. REELING OFF THE
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NAMES OF A GROUP OF CURRENT LEADERS FROM PATRICIO AYLWIN,

PRESIDENT OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, ON DOWN, HE ASSERTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD EMBARKED ON A POLICY OF ACTIVE AND OPEN INTIMIDATION. DIRECTORATE OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE (DINA) CARS WERE OSTENTATIOUSLY PARKED IN FRONT OF THEIR HOUSES; THEY, THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN WERE FOLLOWED WHEN THEY LEFT HOME; A NUMBER OF THEM HAD RECEIVED ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE CALLS THREATENING THEM IN VARIOUS WAYS. FOR ALL THE LEADERS LIFE HAD THUS BECOME MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.

5. FREI THOUGHT THESE STEPS REFLECTED WEAKNESS RATHER THAN STRENGTH ON THE PART OF THE JUNTA. HE THOUGHT THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE WEAKNESS WAS THE RECALCITRANT ECONOMIC SITUATION. WHILE THERE WERE A FEW PEOPLE WHO WERE MAKING MONEY IN CHILE, HE FOUND THE SITUATION AMONG THE POOR AND LOWER MIDDLE CLASS WORSE THAN EVER BEFORE. HE SPOKE BITTERLY OF WHAT HE TERMED REDUCTIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF SCHOOL FEEDING AT A TIME WHEN FOOD IN THE LOW-INCOME AREAS WAS SCARCE AND EXPENSIVE, AND CONTRASTED THIS WITH THE ABUNDANCE OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR THE COUNTRY'S SWOLLEN MILITARY BUDGET.

6. I ASKED FREI WHETHER HE FORESAW ANY STRONG POPULAR REACTION TO THE CURRENT HARDSHIPS. AS IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT ANY IMMEDIATE OVERT OPPOSITION. HE DID FEEL THAT AS IN THE CASE OF OTHER DICTATORSHIPS, THIS ONE HAD BECOME A PRISONER OF ITS INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE. ULTIMATELY, THE GOVERNMENT'S REPRESSIVE POLICY WAS BOUND TO HAVE AN EFFECT.

7. I ASKED FREI ABOUT TRENDS IN THE PDC. HE SEEMED RELUCTANT TO GET INTO INTERNAL PARTY DEVELOPMENTS BUT DID POINT OUT ONE NEW FACTOR. HE SAID THE PARTY WAS FINDING IT MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO GET PROFESSIONAL MEN TO SIGN PUBLIC LETTERS OR TAKE ACTIONS IN THE NAME OF THE PARTY: THEY PLED THEIR INABILITY TO DO SO BECAUSE THEY WOULD LOSE THEIR JOBS AND THE LIVELIHOOD OF THEIR FAMILIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, FREI FOUND THAT THE YOUNG AND THE POOR, HAVING NOTHING TO LOSE, WERE INCLINED TO BE MORE FORTHRIGHT AND ACTIVIST.

8. FREI SPOKE IN GLOWING TERMS OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES. INTER ALIA HE DEEPLY APPRECIATED THE TIME  
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SPENT WITH HIM BY SENATOR HUMPHREY. HE HOPED HE HAD GIVEN THE SENATOR AN APPRECIATION OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM OF ARMS FOR CHILE. FREI HAD POINTED OUT TO THE SENATOR THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE U.S. OF KEEPING CHILE DISARMED WHILE PERU ACQUIRED NEW EQUIPMENT. AS A PATRIOT FREI COULD NOT GO ALONG WITH THE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO. NOR COULD HE AGREE TO A CUTOFF OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WHICH WOULD INJURE THE ALREADY DESPERATE ECONOMIC STATE OF THE CHILEAN PEOPLE.

AT THE SAME TIME, HE WAS LOATH TO ENDORSE SUPPORT FOR THE  
JUNTA. IT WAS A REAL DILEMMA.  
POPPER

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PERSONAL OPINION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 11 AUG 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** CunninFX  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976SANTIA07800  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Line Count:** 118  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** CunninFX  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 14 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <14 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <27 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** CHILE: DISCUSSION WITH EX-PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINT, CI, US, (FREI, EDUARDO)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006